

Foreign Policy Priorities in Asia

April 24, 1981



United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

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Following is an address by Walter J. Stoessel, Jr., Under Secretary for Political Affairs, before the Los Angeles World Affairs Council in California on April 24, 1981.

It is my distinct pleasure to be here with you on the west coast of our nation. I must confess that the pressures of work in Washington these past 2 months make it all the more pleasant to be here as a result of your kind invitation. And the important tasks which this Administration has begun to address require your full participation and understanding in order that we have consensus and support.

The Los Angeles World Affairs Council justifiably ranks at the top of the councils around our great country. I speak with full personal conviction when I say that your role is essential in contributing to public understanding of the most pressing and complex international issues of our day. It is up to you and the other councils to provide the framework for interaction between our foreign policy officials and the informed American citizens without whose support our policies can neither prevail nor be effective. Let me express the Department of State's appreciation for those efforts along with my personal gratitude for your kindness in inviting me here today.

I want to share with you some thoughts about the main foreign policy priorities of President Reagan and his Administration. We are planning ahead. Our reviews of policy priority issues have been intensive and productive. Obviously, there is much yet to be done, but clear trends of our policy are already discernible. And we have begun to apply them.

I would like in particular today to place special emphasis on our foreign relations priorities in Asia, where our interests and commitments are long standing and where this Administration will place special and continuing emphasis.

Basic Elements

First, let me mention four basic elements of our overall foreign policy approach—four anchors for us as we look at the turbulent world scene.

First, we have recognized that, beyond simply asserting our role as leaders of the free world, we must act as leaders. Responsible American leadership is of the utmost importance in achieving our aim of a just and stable world order. We must be strong, balanced, consistent, and reliable in our policies and our actions, and we must proceed with prudence and sensitivity with regard to the interests of our allies and friends consulting fully with them as we work together for the more secure and prosperous world we all desire.

Second, we have seen and acted on the need to improve our own defenses. We must strengthen our military position in order to compensate for the tremendous buildup of Soviet military power which has been going on for the past two decades. We must keep in mind the saying that "defense may not be everything, but without it there is nothing."

Third, we are concerned in a very basic way by the worldwide pattern of Soviet adventurism. We seek a greater degree of moderation and restraint as well as commitment to abide by international law in Soviet behavior, but only the evident strength of our nation and of our friends and allies will serve the quest for stability with the Soviet Union.

Fourth, and of utmost importance, is the essential task of restoring viability, productivity, and balance in our domestic economy. This has been a primary objective of President Reagan's policies and much has been accomplished in a remarkably short time. We also recognize the significance and importance of our actions in the international economic context, and we believe that our forthright attack on problems at home fits our longer international effort to contribute to building a more prosperous, stable, and equitable world order. Without this effort to set our economic house in order, none of the above stated priorities will be possible to carry out.

In our emphasis on the above elements of our policy, we will take care that our policies throughout the world are conducted with consistency and clarity. It is also essential that our efforts be focused within a framework which permits actions and policies in one region to be mutually reinforcing in another region.

U.S. Interests in Asia

Turning now to Asia in particular, our interests are diverse and long standing. They encompass security and economic commitments on the one hand and friendship and cultural affinity with the peoples of the region on the other. Our security arrangements are spelled out in bilateral treaties with Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines; our trilateral treaty with Australia and New Zealand (ANZUS); and the Manila Pact, under which we have a commitment to the security of Thailand. In a broad sense, then, we are committed to peace and stability throughout the region.

In recent years, we have recognized that our Asian security policy is related to our larger task of coping with the strategic challenge posed by our principal adversary, the Soviet Union, and by the aggressive actions of nations which receive its backing and act as its proxies, such as Vietnam. The challenge is global in character, and what we do in Asia will be consistent with our efforts elsewhere.

On the economic and commercial front, the indicators point to a solid relationship. Total U.S. trade with East Asia equals our trade with all of Western Europe.

Let me discuss the key relationships we have in the region and the key question: What are the Reagan Administration's policy priorities?

Japan

Our relationship with Japan is not only the cornerstone of our policy in Asia but one of the most close and vital relationships in our global alliance structure. As the relationship has matured, we have forged a productive partnership to deal with many of the most serious challenges of our times.

As part of our security agreement with Tokyo, we maintain a credible deterrent force in East Asia. The Japanese have undertaken an increasingly larger contribution to the costs of maintaining these forces. Together, we have worked out guidelines for joint defense planning and continue to consult extensively on defense issues.

Our economic ties are no less important. Bilateral trade between our two nations exceeded \$51.5 billion in 1980. Japan is our largest market after Canada and our best customer for agricultural products, as more acreage in the United States is devoted to producing food for Japan than within Japan itself.

No relationship, no matter how solid, is without some rough spots. Our large bilateral trade deficit and the auto import question are two economic issues which both countries will need to resolve. On the trade deficit, I might note that a positive trend has emerged, which will contribute to a more balanced relationship. So far in 1981, our exports to Japan have risen dramatically—46% since 1978—while our imports rose by only 8% during the same period.

Our two nations are firmly linked as equal partners in a full spectrum of regional and global interests. We have welcomed the emergence of a more active Japanese foreign policy and Japanese initiatives in dealing with many different issues of global concern. In addition to its involvement in Asian and Pacific questions, Japan has demonstrated its willingness to play an active and constructive role in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Japan has made a commitment to provide greater amounts of economic assistance to developing countries, accepting the responsibilities of the world's second largest economic power.

We welcome and encourage a major Japanese role in world affairs. We will look to Japan to exercise leadership in dealing with the complex challenges confronting the international community. In this regard, we welcome the visit to our country in early May of Prime Minister Suzuki as a unique opportunity to take stock of our mutual interests and to devise common strategies.

China

Our relations with China are governed by the terms of the joint communique of January 1, 1979, establishing diplomatic relations between our two countries. These ties, now over 2 years old, are firmly grounded on both sides in enlightened self-interest and mutual respect. They represent a return to an historic pattern of friendship and productive dialogue between the American and Chinese people.

We recognize that the 1 billion people of China play a very important role in the maintenance of global peace and stability. Our many interests intersect many points along the way. Our policies toward Soviet expansion and hegemonism run on parallel tracks. In Southwest Asia, particularly, we stand together in demanding Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and a halt to Soviet southward expansion. We each place emphasis on bolstering the security of Pakistan and other neighboring states, while seeking to improve our respective relations with India.

In our relationship with China, we will strengthen the institutional framework within which economic, cultural, scientific, and technological programs between our two peoples can reach their fullest potential. We are making great progress in this regard. As many as 100 Chinese delegations visit the United States each month. More than 70,000 Americans visited China last year. Our two-way trade reached \$4.9 billion last year, doubling that in the previous year.

Equally important, our two governments have established a pattern of frequent and extremely useful consultations between our highest leaders and diplomats. We will continue the serious dialogue on international security matters which now takes place in an atmosphere of friendship and candor.

Regarding Taiwan, this Administration intends to implement faithfully the Taiwan Relations Act, the law passed by Congress which sets the parameters for our nonofficial ties on the basis of a longstanding and warm friendship with the people of Taiwan. Our conduct of this relationship with Taiwan will be responsible, respectful, realistic, and consistent with our international obligations.

Korea

This Administration's approach to our relations with South Korea offers a solid demonstration of our intention to be a reliable friend and ally there, as elsewhere in Asia. In this regard, we have moved quickly to affirm our security commitment to the Republic of Korea and to lay to rest any notion that this Administration will contemplate withdrawing U.S. forces from South Korea in the foreseeable future. Our solid support for South Korea is essential to the efforts to reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula. President Reagan personally delivered the U.S. commitment to Korean President Chun, during the latter's visit to Washington earlier this year. President Chun's visit, just as the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Suzuki of Japan, points up our emphasis on key security relationships.

South Korea has also become a major economic partner of the United States. It was our ninth largest trading partner last year and our third largest market of agricultural products. Our trade with Korea is remarkably in balance, and our growing economic relationships strongly undergird our important security cooperation.

ASEAN

Finally, let me mention our relations with the countries comprising the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ASEAN group includes the countries of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Born out of economic self-interest 13 years ago, ASEAN has successfully branched out into key political areas. It has played a major role in dealing with the danger of Vietnamese hegemony in the region, including Vietnam's aggression against and occupation of Kampuchea. Our ASEAN friends know, as we know, that it is only through the Soviet Union's supply of weapons and assistance that Vietnam is able to sustain these aggressive actions. The United States firmly supports the U.N. General Assembly resolution sponsored by ASEAN which condemns Vietnamese aggression and calls for withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea and for an international conference under auspices of the U.N. Secretary General. Secretary Haig's planned attendance at the ASEAN conference in Manila this June will afford us a timely opportunity to consult with our Asian friends on common objectives.

Conclusion

I would like to close my remarks by expressing conviction that in the first 100 days of this Administration we have laid the solid foundations for regaining the confidence of our friends and the respect of our adversaries. This has been achieved during a series of official visits to Washington by key leaders, the recent trip to the Middle East by the Secretary, and the ongoing consultations with our European allies. We are re-assuming the responsibilities of leadership. None of us minimizes the problems and the amount of work involved in attaining this objective. But we do not shrink from the challenges ahead, and I submit that, in Asia as elsewhere, the Reagan Administration has made a good start on the long road that lies ahead. ■

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